(d) whether Government are aware that because of the inherent dangers in nuclear energy many countries have placed an embargo on it specially after the disclousres on Chernobyl, three mile island and earlier accidents in USSR which have led to widespread cancer as also in Japan; and

(e) whether Government will have a public debate on the question and invite specialists and activists to participate before embarking on this decision from which it is likely to retract after costly experience as in case of several drugs, pesticides etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) Government after careful evaluation of the merits and demerits of food irradiation technology has approved in principle the irradiation process for preservation of food stuffs in 1987. Scientific studies conducted have proved that irradiated food is not harmful for human consumption. So, BARC/DAE is now keen to promote this technology in the country.

(b) Government are aware that some countries including Australia and New Zealand have not so for given clearance for the food preservation by irradiation process.

(c) Government are aware that in some countries like Germany, Australia & Sweden, there is opposition by some consumer forum against introduction and acceptance of irradiated food.

(d) Government are aware of the accidents in the nuclear power plants at three mile island and Chernobyl. However, irradiation of food is not done in a nuclear reactor, but in a food irradiator where either an isotopic source, Cobalt-60, or X-rays or electrons generated from linear accelerator, are used. There is no residual radioactivity left in the food stuffs in these processes causing any damage to the consumers and accidents like those possible in nuclear power reactors are not possible in these irradiators.

(e) There is no need now for the Government to have a public debate on the question of food irradiation, because before clearing irradiation processing, the Government had appointed a Cabinet Committee to study all aspects of food irradiation and the clearance has been given based upon their recommendation.

Strike by operators of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre's High Fluxe Reactor

3072. SHRI S. MADHAVAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the operators of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre's high fluxe reactor, Bombay have struck work protesting against the action taken by the management;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to resolve the dispute between the management and the operators?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) and (b) Out of over 13,800 persons working in Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), a very small number of 136 Tradesmen designated as Plant Operators working in the Research Reactors, Dhruva and Cirus had sought recognition for the so called 'BARC High Flux Reactor Operators Association'. Since there is already a Union in BARC representing Groups C and D staff under the Joint Consultative Machinery Scheme (JCM Scheme), the Operators were informed that it would not be possible to give recognition to another Association representing such a small number. The Operators absented from duty unauthorisedly from 11-6-92 onwards.

(c) The Plant Operators were repeatedly persuaded to join back for duty and they finally resumed duties on 26-6-92.

Equipments and machinery purchased for Tarapur and other projects

3073. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had received a representation dated 14th December, 1989 containing details of misdeeds in the Nuclear Power Corporation Limited since September, 1987; if so, the details thereof indicating enquiry made or proposed to be made in the matter;

(b) whether it is a fact that the attention of the Prime Minister was successively drawn to the matter;

(c) whether it is also a fact that equipments and machinery worth Rs. 3,000 crores were purchased for Tarapur, Kota and Kaiga projects in anticipation of the clearance of these projects;

(d) if so, whether these equipments were put to use;

(e) whether CAG conducted any audit of the purchases; and

(f) whether Government would consider constitution of a Parliamentary Committee to look into it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM): (a) and (b) Two letters, one dated 14th December, 1989 and another dated 25th September, 1990, were received pointing out certain irregularities in the working of the Nuclear Power Corporation. These were duly examined.

(c) and (d) During the period from 1986 to 1991, advance action for procurement of certain critical and long delivery components and equipments for 6x500 MWe units and 4x220 MWe units at a cost of about Rs. 760 crores, was taken, with the approval of the Atomic Energy Commission and the Government, with a view to reduce the gestation time. This amounts to less than 10 per cent of the total outlay on these projects. Subsequent developments such as severe resource crunch resulting in paucity of funds for new projects, the high interest rate of market borrowings, etc. introduced a delay in the commencement of new projects. Corrective action by way of slowing down the advance action wherever possible has been initiated. All equipments and components will eventually be installed and used in the projects.

(e) and (f) The Nuclear Power Corporation has been subjected to regular audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India and its working is also subject to review by the existing Committees of Parliament.

Setting up of Fertilizer Plants

3074. SHRI A. NALLASIVAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1966 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 14th May, 1992 and state:

(a) the number of new fertilizer plants to be set up during the Eighth Five Year Plan period and their capacities to meet the demand of extra fertilizer;

(b) the quantity of fertilizer to be imported and the amount of foreign exchange required for that in five years;

(c) the cost of installing new plants and the foreign exchange required to get the amount of extra fertilizer that could be produced by renovating the old plants;

(d) whether it is less costly to renovate the old plants than to instal new plants to get the same amount of extra fertilisers; and

(e) if so, the steps taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHINTA MOHAN): (a) Subject to availability of natural gas